

HIGHLIGHTS IN INDIANA
HISTORY - Mc MURTRY

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Highlights in Indiana History

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN HIGHLIGHTS IN INDIANA HISTORY
By
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For many years the period of time during which Abraham Lincoln resided in Indiana was called "the missing link in Lincoln's life." Until recently, historians and biographers wrote rather vaguely of those fourteen years -- those long, growing years of Lincoln's boyhood and youth. These writers related how his "angel mother" died when young Abe was only nine; how his father, Thomas Lincoln, returned to Kentucky to marry his old sweetheart, Sally Bush Johnston, a widow burdened with a family of three; how Abe made a long trip by flatboat to New Orleans; how Abe studied books and took long walks across the country; how Abe read the "Life of Washington" by Ramsey; how Abe went to "Forest College" and secured a deficient education; and how schoolmaster Azel Dorsey prophesied that Abe was destined somehow to succeed.

These dim and somewhat legendary stories have been repeated time and time again. Yet, for some unexplained reason, only careful students of history have appreciated the great contribution Indiana made to Abraham Lincoln between the years 1816 and 1830. Fortunately in 1959 the Indiana Historical Society and the firm of Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. published Dr. Louis A. Warren's exhaustive work entitled "Lincoln's Youth - Indiana Years Seven to Twenty-one 1816-1830," which is based on authentic sources and documentary evidence. This scholarly work has been widely distributed and has at last provided the public with a much needed lesson in history. No longer are people of the opinion that Lincoln was born in Kentucky and after a few years, in some miraculous way, appeared in Illinois where he trod the path of destiny.

In truth, the State of Indiana looms large in the biography of Abraham Lincoln, and in a sense Lincoln looms large in the history of Indiana. Not only is Lincoln associated with the early history of the state, but he was born in Kentucky the same year, 1809, that Indiana was set apart from Illinois as a separate territory.

MIGRATION TO INDIANA

Lincoln grew up in the State of Indiana, coming to it at the time the state was established in (December 11) 1816, and remaining until 1830--the year the Indiana Pioneer Association set apart as the concluding year of the pioneer era. When Lincoln, a small lad of seven years, came to Indiana, there were but fifteen counties in the state. When Lincoln left the Hoosier state, he was a grown man, 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighing over two hundred pounds. In the meantime, Indiana had grown up; and by 1830 fifty-eight counties had been established. Whereas in 1816 there were but 63,000 people in Indiana, by the year 1830 there were 341,582 inhabitants.

Although Indiana was sparsely settled in 1816, we must not conclude that the Thomas Lincoln family was the first to settle in the region where they decided to make their home. The year before their arrival (1815) three hundred and eighteen men paid taxes in Perry County, Indiana, the county in which the Lincolns settled. For a Fourth of July celebration in 1815 on the banks of the Wabash River, one hundred and fifty people were present--all living within twelve miles of the New Harmony settlement.

Approximately forty miles east of Thomas Lincoln's cabin the State Capital of Corydon was located. About the same distance west of the Lincoln home was Evansville, which as early as June 21, 1814 advertised the

sale of lots. Their sales publicity was to the effect that "Evansville is in the midst of a flourishing settlement." Princeton, a community to the northwest of the Lincoln country, also advertised a lot sale in 1814.

When Abraham Lincoln moved to Indiana practically all of the inhabitants were then living within one hundred miles of the Ohio River, and the area to which Lincoln and his parents moved was primarily a Kentucky colony. Oddly enough, Thomas Lincoln was not the first Lincoln to establish a home in Southern Indiana. Austin and David Lincoln, two sons of Hannaniah Lincoln of Hardin County, Kentucky, were the first of the family to establish homes in this region. Perhaps it was slavery, faulty Kentucky land titles and the sons of Hannaniah Lincoln that caused the father of the future sixteenth president to decide to move to the territory that was about to become a state.

There are a lot of hind-sights in history; however, it is perhaps impossible to exaggerate the significance of the crossing of the Ohio River by the Lincolns in 1816. While the Ohio was affectionately called La Belle Riviere and acclaimed by many to be the most beautiful river in the world, it was a boundary line between slavery and freedom, between two warring institutions that would rend the nation asunder in the 1860's.

If Lincoln had grown up in the state of Kentucky where slavery was tolerated, it is doubtful if he would have been prepared for leadership in the great struggle that was to follow. One writer has even suggested that a canvass depicting Lincoln's crossing the Ohio deserves a place next to that inspirational study of George Washington crossing the Delaware.

MIGRATION TO ILLINOIS

Lincoln left Indiana in a family caravan of thirteen people in early March of 1830 enroute to Illinois. There is an account in the files of the Lincoln National Life Foundation of a portion of that journey incorporated in a letter written by Peter Smith to J. Warren Keifer of Springfield, Ohio, dated July 17, 1860. Presidential candidate Lincoln told Peter Smith the details of his crossing the Wabash River at Vincennes:

"I crossed the Wabash at Vincennes and the river being high the road on the low prairie was covered with water a half mile at a stretch and the water covered with ice--the only means by which I could keep the road was by observing the stakes on each side placed as guides when the water is over the road. When I came to the water I put a favorite fice dog I had along into the wagon and got in myself and whipped up my oxen and started into the water to pick my way across as well as I could--after breaking the ice and wading about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile my little dog jumped out of the wagon and the ice being thin he broke through and was struggling for life. I could not bear to lose my dog and I jumped out of the wagon and waded waist deep in the ice and water--got hold of him and helped him out and saved him."

Peter Smith asked Lincoln if he was barefoot. Lincoln replied:

"About thirty years ago I did drive my father's ox waggon and team moving my father's family through your town of Lawrenceville (Ill.) and I was afoot but not barefoot. In my young days I frequently went barefooted but on that occasion I had on a substantial pair of shoes--it was a cold day in March and I never went barefooted in cold weather."

Destiny beckoned to Lincoln as he moved to Illinois. Senator
Lincoln-
Albert Beveridge in his biography of Lincoln related that in that [^]Hanks-Hall clan of thirteen people moving by ox team to Illinois only young Abraham knew of that great conflict of reason and eloquence--the Hayne-Webster debate which was the pinnacle of conflict of that great battle over slavery and states rights then ranging in the ^{United States} Senate. [^]

When Lincoln left Indiana in 1830 "he was a Whig at heart--ready to enlist, as he quickly did, under the banner of the gallant,

dashing 'Harry of the West' (Henry Clay)". Certainly, Indiana can take credit for molding Lincoln's political thinking--and Lincoln's political philosophy was and is today a pretty important factor in United States and world history.

VISIT IN 1844

Lincoln returned to Indiana fourteen years later in October 1844. He came "thinking he might carry the state of Indiana for Mr. Clay." While on this visit he went back into the neighborhood where he was raised--where his mother and sister were buried. He visited such places as Vincennes, Rockport, Evansville and Gentryville. Not one of his speeches has been preserved but there is little doubt about his topic. The topic was protection--a protective tariff. On May 12, 1860 Lincoln wrote Dr. Edward Wallace: "In the days of Henry Clay I was a Henry Clay-tariff man, and my views have undergone no material change upon that subject." Lincoln always had great admiration for Henry Clay. In 1861 Lincoln wrote a Springfield citizen that "during my whole political life ... I have loved and revered (Clay) as a teacher and a leader."

Lincoln became sentimental about his old Indiana home, even though he later said that "that part of the country is within itself as unpoetical as any spot on earth." But upon seeing the area, its objects and inhabitants, there was aroused in Lincoln feelings which were certainly poetic, although as he put it, "whether my expression of those feelings is poetry is quite another question." Lincoln's Indiana visit of 1844 led to the writing of a poem of twenty-one stanzas usually referred to as "My Childhood Home" and a twenty-two

stanza poem entitled a "Bear Hunt." Both of these poems reveal the author's sensitive nature and nostalgic feelings but, as Lincoln stated, whether they are "poetry is quite another matter."

VISIT IN 1855

Lincoln's second visit to Indiana was in September (17th) of 1855, when he traveled by rail to Cincinnati, Ohio. From Bloomington, Illinois, Lincoln traveled by way of Chicago, Michigan City, Lafayette and Indianapolis. The trip required about twenty-four hours. Lincoln went to Cincinnati as counsel in the McCormick Reaper Case, where he was curtly dismissed by Edwin M. Stanton, counsel for the defense (Manny interests), which proved to be one of the most humiliating episodes in his entire legal career. On September 26, Lincoln made the statement that, "I have nothing against the city, but things have so happened here as to make it undesirable for me ever to return ..." We have no idea as to Lincoln's route of travel homeward. There are traditions about a stage coach trip Lincoln made with Colonel Tom Nelson and Bayless Hanna from Indianapolis to Terre Haute, but the chronology of events do not dovetail well with established facts.

VISIT IN 1859

On September 19, 1859 Lincoln appeared for the first time in his life before a large Indiana audience. Indiana's capital was an important city in his Columbus, Dayton, Hamilton, Cincinnati and Indianapolis itinerary. The theme of Lincoln's speeches at this time was a continuation of those questions which had provoked the Lincoln-Douglas debates a year before. Lincoln still opposed Stephen A. Douglas and his interpretation of the motivation of the Founding Fathers in regard to slavery, when they drafted the Constitution.

Mrs. Lincoln and one of the sons, perhaps Robert, accompanied Lincoln to Indianapolis. They left Cincinnati on Monday, September 19, at 10:30 a.m. and they arrived in Indianapolis in the afternoon. They stayed at the American House.

That evening, Lincoln spoke before a large audience at the Masonic Hall for nearly two hours. The Indianapolis Atlas of September 19, 1858 reported Lincoln's speech. He said that: "Appearing at the capital of this now great State, and traveling through a good portion of it in coming from Cincinnati, had combined to revive his recollection of the earlier years of his life."

He continued, "Away back in the fall of 1816, when he was in his eighth year, his father brought him over from the neighboring state of Kentucky and settled in the state of Indiana, and he grew up to his present enormous height on our own good soil of Indiana."

This was a meeting marked with good fellowship, frequently interrupted by cheers and laughter. When Lincoln closed his remarks he sat down amid great applause. According to the Illinois State Journal of September 22, 1859 Lincoln is said to have made two speeches in Indiana on his Ohio-Indiana trip. Efforts to find the other speech, or even a reference to the time and place of delivery have been unsuccessful.

There is a tradition that Lincoln went home by way of Terre Haute because his son Robert had been bitten by a ^{rabid} dog, and that Indiana city had a famous "Mad Stone." An item which appeared in the Terre Haute Journal of 1866 stated that a lady of that city "is in possession of a valuable madstone and it has effected

many remarkable cures of dog and snake bites. Hundreds of persons, some from great distances have tested its efficacy in such cases." Certainly evidence of a mad stone at Terre Haute is established. But more evidence is needed to establish the fact of Lincoln's visit there in the early fall of 1859.

VISIT IN 1860

Only recently has evidence been discovered that Lincoln traveled through Indiana in February of 1860 enroute to New York to deliver his famous Cooper Union address. A news item of but six lines which appeared in Dawson's Daily News of Fort Wayne, Indiana, on Thursday, February 23, 1860 revealed that "Hon. Abe Lincoln and wife came from the west this morning at 1 o'clock on the T. (Toledo) W. (Wabash) & W. (Western) R. R. and changing cars at this city went east. 'Old Abe' looked like as if his pattern had been a mighty ugly one." This news story is of considerable significance because it not only adds to our knowledge of the route Lincoln traveled to New York City but it reveals some incorrect assumptions about his activities prior to "the speech which made Lincoln president."

The Dawson Daily News reporter was in error in stating that Mrs. Lincoln accompanied her husband. The lady in question was Mrs. Stephen Smith who had with her a son named Dudley. Her husband was a brother of Clark M. Smith who married Ann Todd, a sister of Mrs. Lincoln. Mrs. Smith was enroute to her ~~girlhood~~ home in Philadelphia, and Lincoln volunteered to assist her with her baggage as she was traveling with a small child.

The T. W. & W. train arrived in Fort Wayne one hour late on Thursday, February 23, but still there was time to "change cars" at 1:12 a.m. aboard the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago road. Lincoln arrived in

New York, by way of Philadelphia, on Saturday, February 25 in ample time to deliver his great address on Monday, February 27th.

Enroute home Lincoln left New York by the Erie Railroad on Monday, March 12 and changed tracks at Toledo on Tuesday, March 13, boarding the T. W. & W. which passed through Fort Wayne at 5:20 p.m. the same day. Apparently only Fort Wayne's Dawson's Daily News reported this hurried trip made by Lincoln as he passed through Indiana, in February of 1860.

INAUGURAL JOURNEY - 1861

The next time Lincoln visited Indiana he came in a blaze of glory. He was on his way to Washington to be inaugurated president of the United States. His inaugural train entered Indiana at State Line on February 11, 1861. The inaugural train made a "whistle stop" tour through all the Indiana towns, except Indianapolis. The towns and cities through which Lincoln traveled were State Line, Lafayette, Thorntown, Lebanon, Zionsville, Indianapolis, Greensburg, Shelbyville, Morris and Lawrenceburg.

The president-elect made rear platform speeches or appearances in the Indiana towns and at Thorntown he started to tell an anecdote to illustrate a point. The train started to move before he got to the place, where the laugh came in, and the people were left to wonder what the meaning might be. Once the train arrived in Lebanon Lincoln was informed by the people there that the Thorntown folks had followed the train on foot to hear the rest of the story. The story was about a candidate's horse that stopped to bite every bush and the candidate arrived after the convention was over. So Lincoln said that "if he made a stump speech at every railway station he would not arrive until the inauguration was over."

The trip through Indiana brought cheering crowds to every station and the reception for Lincoln at Indianapolis was on an elaborate scale, quite beyond anything in the previous history of the Indiana capital. Governor Oliver P. Morton extended to president-elect Lincoln official greetings. Replying to Governor Morton's greetings Lincoln said, to give only some excerpts of his address, that: "If the Union of these States and the liberties of this people, shall be lost, it is but little to any one man of fifty-two years of age, but a great deal to the thirty millions of people who inhabit these United States, and to their posterity in all coming time." Evidently Lincoln was thinking of his 52nd birthday which he would celebrate the next day on the 12th of February. Lincoln continued, "I appeal to you again to constantly bear in mind that with you, and not with politicians, not with presidents, not with office-seekers, but with you, is the question, shall the Union and shall the liberties of this country be preserved to the latest generations?"

Lincoln made two addresses at Indianapolis, one from the rear and platform of his railway coach, one from the balcony of the Bates House (Claypool Hotel). Spending the night at Indianapolis, Mr. Lincoln and his party continued on their journey to Cincinnati. Lawrenceburg, Indiana, was the last town in which Abraham Lincoln spoke or visited in Indiana, and the press dispatches stated that he left, "amid salutes, music and tumultuous cheering." His parting words were, "... if you, the people, are but true to yourselves and to the Constitution, there is but little harm I can do, thank God."

PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND INDIANA

As president of the United States Lincoln did not forget Indiana and its important role in saving the Union. The truth of the matter is

that Governor Morton would not let him forget. The year that Lincoln took the oath of office there was considerable fear that civil war might break out in Kentucky, that Union men would be defeated and that Kentucky would join the Confederacy. This would place Indiana on the border line of the war. Morton wrote Lincoln long and pleading letters that are to be found in the Lincoln National Life Foundation archives:

"Our state is more exposed to the dangers arising from civil war in Kentucky than any other. It will be a sad day to you and to the nation when Kentucky drifts into revolution. The misfortune at Bull Run would be a mere trifle compared with it, and it can best be averted in my humble judgment by thoroughly arming the militia of Southern Indiana and stationing regular forces at proper points on the border."

We know the outcome. Kentucky was not lost to the Union and Indiana did not become a battleground.

Reversing the situation, in the election year of 1864 Lincoln called on Indiana for help. On September 19, 1864 Lincoln wrote Major-William T. General Sherman a letter which is in the Foundation's archives, that:

"The State election of Indiana occurs on the 11th of October and the loss of it, to the friends of the government, would go far toward losing the whole Union cause. The bad effect upon the November election, and especially the giving the state government to those who will oppose the war in every possible way, are too much to risk, if it can possibly be avoided. Indiana is the only important state, voting in October, whose soldiers cannot vote in the field. Anything you can safely do to let her soldiers, or any part of them, go home and vote at the state election will be greatly in point."

While Indiana had within its boundaries a strong Copperhead movement, it never let the president down at the polls at election time.

Indiana poured troops into Union armies, furnished three members of Lincoln's Cabinet (not all at the same time), provided generals to lead Union armies, sent strong leaders to Congress and backed up Lincoln's philosophy of Union and democratic government "that we shall nobly save or meanly loose the last best hope of earth." Lincoln, Indiana and the

Union prevailed, although it has been said that the Civil War was the most tragic breakdown of democratic processes in history.

The Lincoln National Life Foundation files abound with Lincoln's references to Indiana men. On December 4, 1862 Lincoln wrote, on a petition signed by ten Indiana politicians recommending the appointment of John T. Morrison of Indiana for the position of quartermaster with the rank of captain that "the recommendation being by nearly all of the Indiana delegation, I wish the appointment made if ~~it~~ can consistently be done." Another endorsement is found in a letter written by John S. Tarkington, the father of the celebrated novelist, Booth Tarkington. John Tarkington wanted his uncle transferred to the regular army with the rank of captain. Lincoln's recommendation dated May 13, 1862 "Respectfully submitted (the letter) to the Secretary of War."

LINCOLN'S FUNERAL

The year 1865 witnessed the colossal tragedy of our history-- the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Springfield, Illinois was decided upon by the Lincoln family as the city where the president's remains were to be entombed. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, immediately began working on a schedule and itinerary for the numerous railroads that would be required to convey the body back to the Illinois capital. Many people were of the opinion that the funeral cortege would follow the route of 1861 when president-elect Lincoln journeyed from Springfield to Washington. Wild rumors, completely unfounded, had the funeral train visiting practically every village and town in the midwest. Even federal and state officials were often confused by conflicting orders and misleading information.

The citizens of Fort Wayne were even surprised to read a Gazette-Extra handbill dated Thursday, April 20, 1865 announcing that "President Lincoln's remains were to stop at Fort Wayne as the funeral train would proceed to Springfield by way of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad." This rumor proved false. Even though Lincoln had been hanged in effigy on October 2, 1860 within Fort Wayne's city limits, the residents were now eager to mourn the passing of the martyred president.

Stanton altered Lincoln's funeral itinerary by omitting Pittsburgh and Cincinnati and by detouring by way of Chicago, instead of going direct to Springfield from Indianapolis. Lincoln's remains reached Indianapolis from Columbus, Ohio, by way of the Columbus and Indianapolis Central Railway which is now a part of the Pennsylvania road. The first Indiana city to be reached enroute to Indianapolis was Richmond. All day Sunday, April 30, the body was in Indianapolis on public view in the Indiana State House. About midnight the coffin was closed for the next journey by way of a "Special" train enroute to Chicago.

Three different railroads were utilized:

1. The Lafayette and Indianapolis to Lafayette (later a part of the Big Four System).
2. The Louisville, New Albany and Chicago, from Lafayette to Michigan City (later a part of the Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railway).
3. The Michigan Central from Michigan City into Chicago (now operated under the same name).

The "Special" enroute to Chicago was made up at Indianapolis and consisted of five cars of the Michigan Railway Company, and two cars that had come through over the entire route. All the cars were appropriately

and lavishly draped. Of the two cars named, one was the superb railway "carriage" built at the government railway shops in Alexandria, Virginia, and intended as the president's coach. It was in this car that the president's remains were placed. Throughout the entire trip the funeral train was preceded by a pilot engine. At every village and town along the Indiana route the grieving people gathered to watch the train go by. In many instances houses and depots were draped in black, salvos of artillery were fired, circulars of a memorial nature were distributed, chairs chanted, torches were lighted, evergreen arches were constructed, logs were burned, flags were draped and mourning badges were worn to express the grief of the country and townspeople who knew in advance that in most cases the train would not stop at their station.

The Indiana cities, towns and villages along the funeral route were:

Richmond	Greenfield	Battleground
Centerville	Cumberland	Reynolds
Cambridge City	Indianapolis	Francisville
Dublin	Zionsville	Madaryville
Lewisville	Whitestown	Lucerne
Coffin's Station	Lebanon	San Pierre
Ogdens	Thorntown	La Crosse
Raysville	Clark's Hill	Michigan City
Knightstown	Stockwell	Lake
Charlottville	Lafayette	<u>and</u> Gibbons

To quote Bishop Matthew Simpson, "Never was there in the history of man such mourning as that which accompanied the funeral possession of Abraham Lincoln."

THE TESTING TIME

Indiana not only visably displayed her grief at Lincoln's funeral but she went on record as viewing the death of Lincoln as a great national calamity. The Supreme Court of the state of Indiana on the morning of

June 20, 1865 adopted a preamble and resolutions that were to be spread upon the records of the court. The first resolution follows:

"That the death of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, is a great national calamity, which nearly and profoundly touches the whole people; that his patient labor and ability, his gentleness and mercy, his unsectional patriotism, and his catholic humanity, are qualities which the country could at any time ill afford to lose; and which, in times like the present it will be difficult to replace."

These resolutions along with the remarks of Justice J. Frazer are to be found in Volume 24 of the Indiana Reports for 1866. This is perhaps the only time in Indiana's history that an Indiana court has memorialized the passing of a president of the United States.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Rare photograph of the funeral hearse and the casket containing Lincoln's remains on an Indianapolis, Indiana street on April 30, 1865.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Rare photograph of the Indiana State House, taken during Lincoln funeral
at Indianapolis, Indiana on April 30, 1865.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Nancy Hanks Lincoln gravestone marking the approximate site of Lincoln's
mother's grave who died October 5, 1818.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Facsimile bronze logs and fireplace stones that mark the exact site of
the Thomas Lincoln cabin home in Indiana.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

An heroic bronze statue of "Abraham Lincoln The Hoosier Youth" by Paul Manship. Dedicated on September 16, 1932 in the entrance plaza of the home office building of The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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Lincoln Highlights in Indiana History

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